



## When are you following to close?

I think we all can name several times when we've seen someone following another vehicle too close, otherwise known as "tailgating". This month's article focuses on following too close, how close is too close and some of the science behind speeds and stopping.

Statute 346.14 states *"The operator of a motor vehicle shall not follow another vehicle more closely than is reasonable and prudent, having due regard for the speed of such vehicle and the traffic upon and the condition of the highway"*.

What does this mean and who decides what is "reasonable and prudent"? In most cases people do a good job staying at a safe distance. That being said, tailgating happens much too often and that is when we get involved. When deputies observe this behavior they make a traffic stop and issue a citation for \$200.50 and 3 points towards the offender's driving record.

Statute 346.16 has some more restrictions for trucks that weigh more than 10,000 pounds.

- (2)(a) Upon a highway outside a business or residence district, the operator of any motor truck with a gross weight of more than 10,000 pounds or of any motor vehicle which is drawing or towing another vehicle where the combined gross weight is more than 10,000 pounds shall do all of the following:
  - Keep the vehicle he or she is operating at a distance of not less than 500 feet to the rear of any vehicle immediately preceding it, being driven in the same direction.
  - Leave sufficient space so that an overtaking vehicle may enter and occupy such space without danger.

The best way to stay safe and keep your pocketbook full is to keep a safe distance when following other vehicles. A good guideline to follow is to stay a car length back for every 10 miles per hour. If you are driving 55 MPH you should stay 6 car lengths back. If you are going 65 MPH bump it up to 7 car lengths.

Keep in mind that all kinds of factors can increase the safe distance. Weather conditions, road conditions, construction zones, vehicle speeds and many other variables come into play.

Human reaction time is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a second not counting tired, impaired or distracted driving. In  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a second a vehicle travels 1.1 feet per MPH of speed. If you are driving 55 MPH that means your vehicle will travel at least 60.5 feet before stopping. Now imagine if you are only 10-20 feet behind the vehicle in front of you when a deer jumps out causing them to slam on the brakes.

Remember- You may be a safe driver, but you can't predict what other drivers will do.

Thank you and stay safe out there,  
Captain Chad Enright